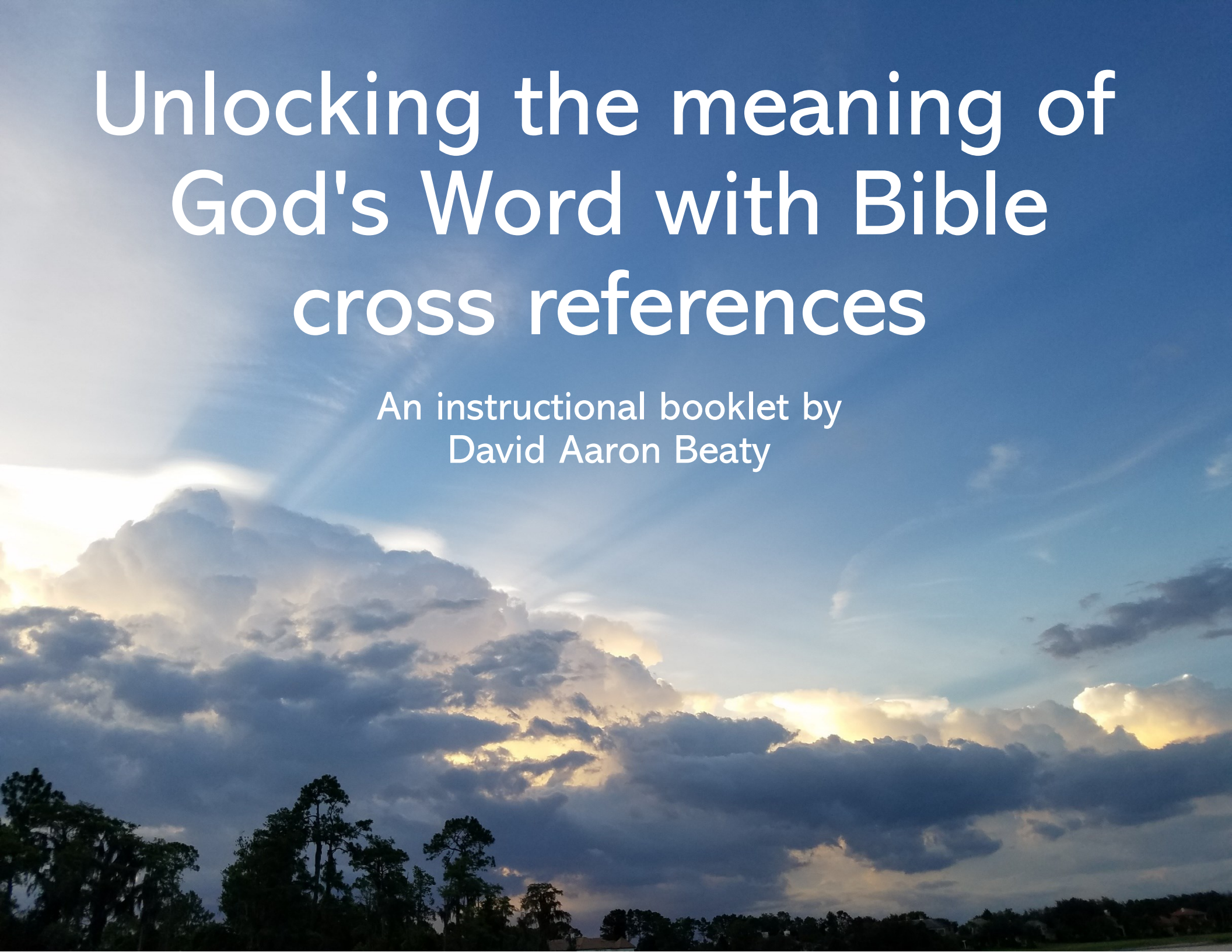
Unlocking the meaning of God's Word with Bible cross references

An instructional booklet by
David Aaron Beaty



Copyright Notice - Copyright © 2023

The author of this booklet places no restrictions on the copying, distribution, or any form of reproduction of this booklet. The author encourages any individual to copy, reproduce, print, electronically post, or otherwise distribute this booklet. The author, in good faith, invokes the doctrine of fair use for criticism and commentary regarding the scripture quotations and computer screenshots found in this booklet. The author of this booklet asserts his copyright ownership to forbid the alteration of this booklet in any way that will change its contents or cover page.

In my studies of the Bible I have run across a big dilemma when it comes to clearly hearing and understanding what God is trying to say to us. As you probably already know, the Bible is highly cross referenced in a way that it extensively explains itself by just pointing to other places in the Bible which contain additional info. For example, the Book of Revelation has almost no direct quotes of the Old Testament, but it uses dozens or maybe even hundreds of small two or three word phrases which are dead ringer copies of the same phrases used in the Old Testament. If one just knows where in the Old Testament to find the phrases, the meaning of the book of Revelation becomes far more accessible. The Old Testament many times explains the meaning of these phrases and thereby explains the book of Revelation. There are several things though that have come together to hinder us from seeing these explanatory cross references between different books of the Bible. The first thing is that we may be reading a translation of the Bible which does very little to clue us in that a cross reference to the Old Testament is being made in the New Testament. Something which can help us to become aware of some of these cross references is just a simple capitalization of the letters containing New Testament direct quotations of the Old Testament. The highly accurate and literally translated New American Standard Bible 2020 edition is a good example of a translation which gives us a little help with this. As you can see in Hebrews 12 below, the capitalization makes it painfully obvious that this is a known cross referenced quote from the Old Testament from Proverbs 3:11-12:

[Hebrews 12:4-6 NASB20] 4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE PUNISHED BY HIM; 6 FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE PUNISHES EVERY SON WHOM HE ACCEPTS."

On the other hand, a translation such as the New International Version, as you see below doesn't make it so obvious:

[Hebrews 12:4-6 NIV] 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."

So if you're reading a Bible that does not capitalize the New Testament cross reference quotations of the Old Testament, you are in some sense flying blind and missing out on a lot of really great low hanging fruit. Many times, going to the Old Testament and reading these quotations in their original context can shed a lot of new light on what they mean when they are cross reference quoted in the New Testament. So we do not simply want to read past these quotations and be unaware of them like we would be if we were reading the New International Version.

Another major obstacle against learning where cross referenced short phrases or longer quotes are pointing to, is just the simple lack of good, published study materials. All of the commonly available books and study bibles which show cross reference verse listings for each verse do not show all of the cross references. They often point to numerous verses which are not even related, and just as often don't show the passage that the biblical writer is very obviously trying to point to. I don't want to say that these books and study bibles are worthless, but it is very clear that they miss many of the important references. Like batters in baseball, some of them have a great batting average, but absolutely none of them hit the ball 100% of the time. This writer has searched high and low throughout the books and publications of high scholarship down to the most popular inexpensive resources available to layman. I found no single cross reference book or cross referenced study Bible that consistently reveals all of the intentional cross references found throughout the Bible. They are all missing some of the most important and enlightening cross references which very clearly unlock the meaning of what the biblical writers and the Holy Spirit are trying to say. I know, I know you are going to tell me that I need to just get one of these books that I'm showing in this short list here below and I'll have all the cross references right at my fingertips:

1. *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*
2. *The Comprehensive New Testament*

3. *The Ultimate Cross Reference Treasury*
4. *Nelson's Cross Reference Guide to The Bible*
5. *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*
6. Your favorite popular study Bible with cross references in the margins

I can tell you with confidence, after having tested all of these extensively, that they all fail miserably a very significant portion of the time. Like baseball batters, none of them have an extremely high batting average. The best average of any of these resources might be something in the range of 50% to 70%. That type of batting average would leave you quite in the dark with no way to understand all of the scriptures being illuminated by biblical cross referencing. A big clue for how to solve this problem might be something that we see on the most dominant and popular Christian study material website on the internet. Logos.com is, bar none, the most popular and most utilized website on the internet which provides Bible study materials for layman, scholars, and pastors. They offer a highly customized suite of software which integrates thousands of books, bibles, ancient writings, and various other study materials related to the Bible. They do directly offer some of the 6 resources that I've shown in my list above, but part of their software has a feature which will pile up all the cross references from numerous different study bibles so you can see them all in one place in their software. This is exactly what this writer found to be the most effective approach for finding as many as possible of the biblical cross references. If you rely on 7 batters instead of 1, at least one of them will almost always hit the ball. Their batting average combined together

ends up being very high, maybe something like 95% or higher. There's a way to do this though without buying expensive logos.com software. You can just go look in numerous study bibles to find all the references. You don't even need to buy seven study bibles to do this, although you could if you are stubbornly loyal to only using physical printed books. As of May 2023, it's quite convenient that you can go to a website such as biblegateway.com and look at as many as five study bibles with all their cross references all at the same time for free. It will probably also be very convenient that this writer has done extensive work to determine which of the dozens of bibles available on biblegateway.com generally have the most extensive and accurate cross reference listings. The three most consistent top performers probably are:

1. NIV 2011 New International Version
2. HCSB 2009 Holman Christian Standard Bible
3. ESV 2016 English Standard Version

Of the three above, hands down, the study Bible with the highest batting average is the NIV 2011. Four others which come in doing better than most other bibles are here:

4. NASB 2020 New American Standard Bible
5. NKJV 1982 New King James Version
6. CSB 2017 Christian Standard Bible
7. NRSVUE 2021 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

It's useful to note that the NRSVUE study Bible shown in the list above translates the very important Philippians 2:12 in an extremely

uncommon way, which as you can see tends to contradict the rest of the Bible and its promotion of salvation by grace and not by works. See the verse here from the NRSVUE:

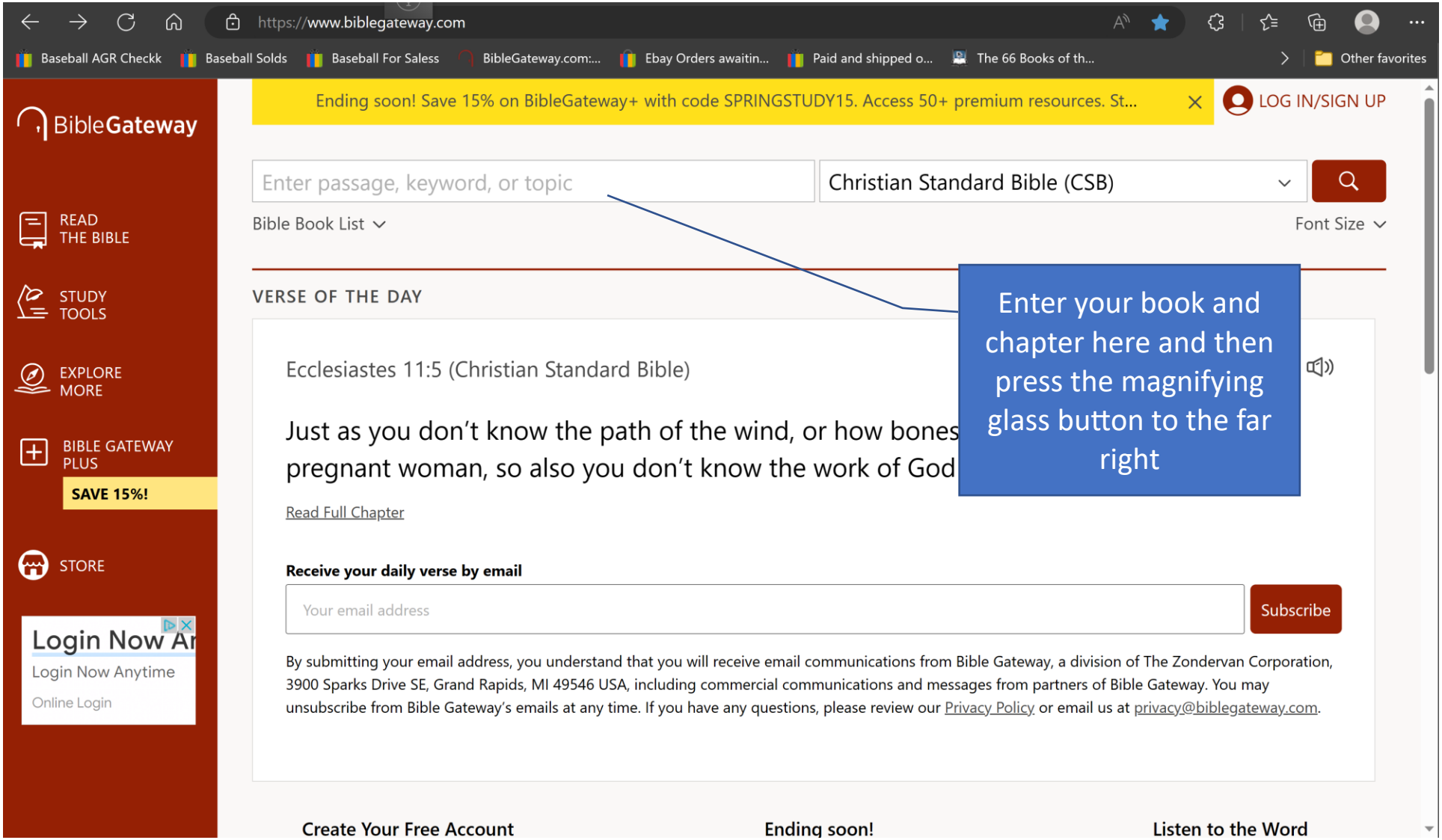
[Philippians 2:12 NRSVUE] Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling,

For reference, here is how the New American Standard Bible 2020 edition translates it:

[Philippians 2:12 NASB20] 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

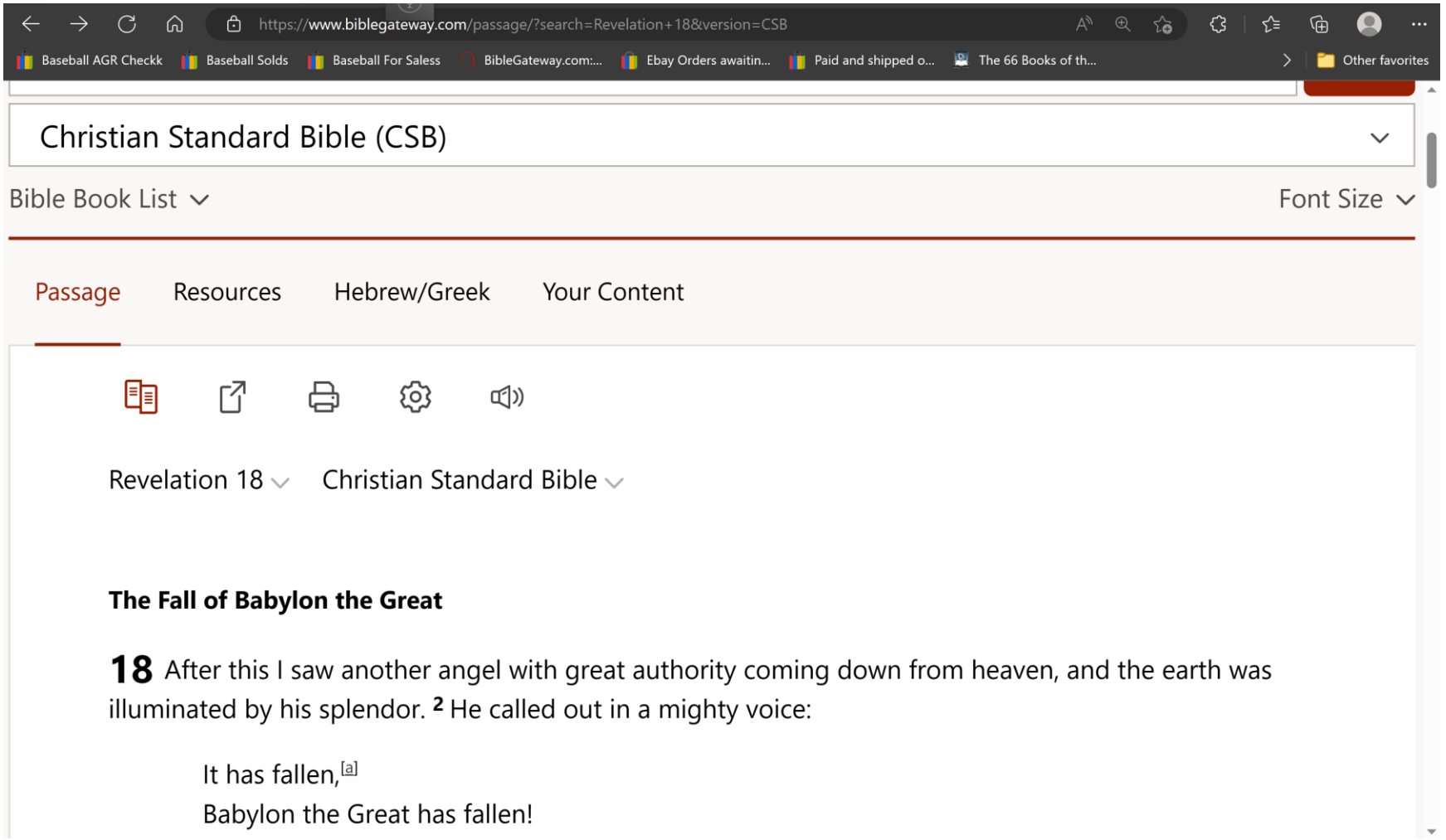
In spite of this, the NRSVUE cross referencing is still useful.

- In order to look at all the cross references from most of these 7 bibles listed above while just looking at one web page, first go to biblegateway.com and enter the book and chapter that you are interested in getting the cross references for. See the computer screenshot below:

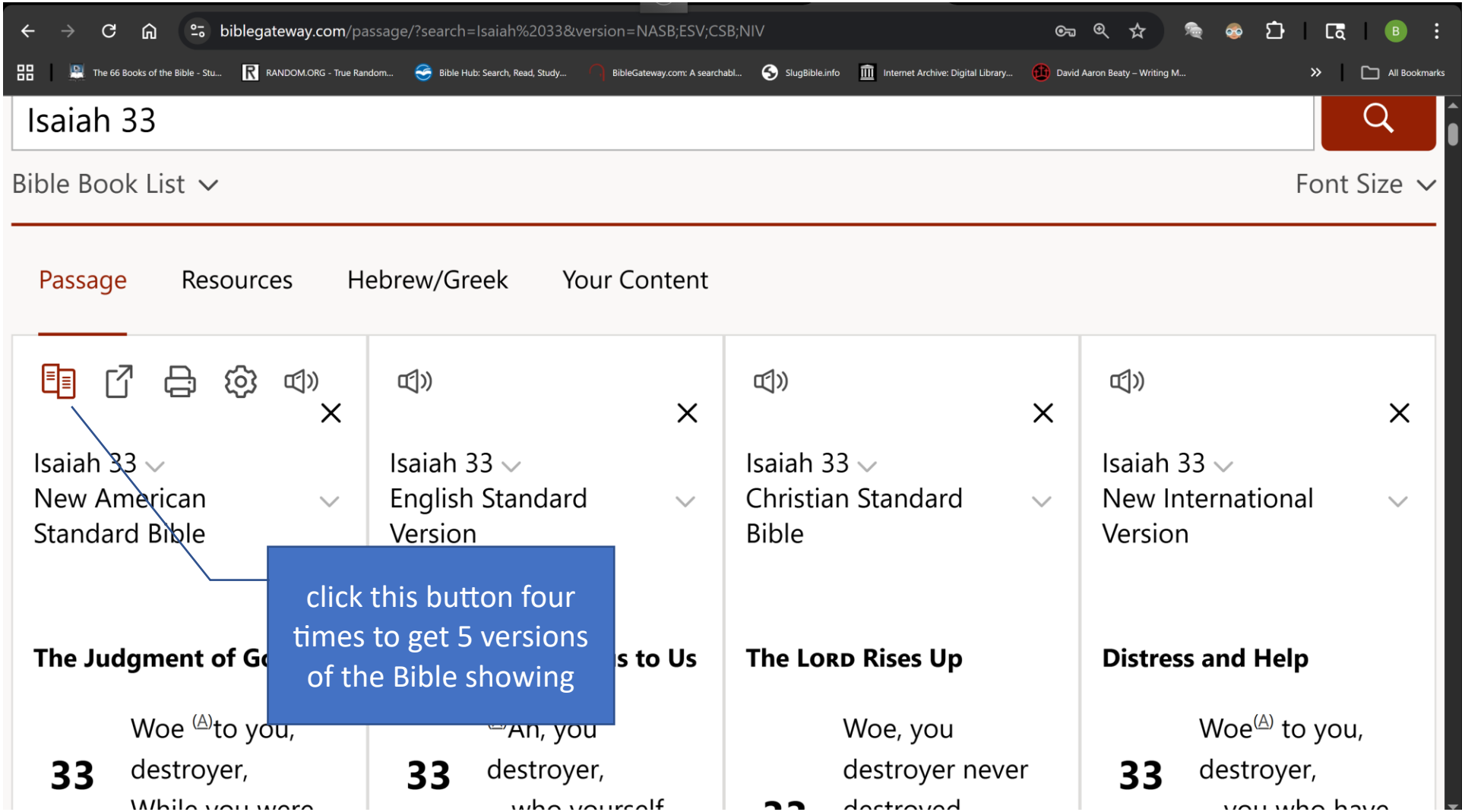

https://www.biblegateway.com
Baseball AGR Checkk
Baseball Solds
Baseball For Saless
BibleGateway.com:...
Ebay Orders awaitin...
Paid and shipped o...
The 66 Books of th...
Other favorites
BibleGateway
Ending soon! Save 15% on BibleGateway+ with code SPRINGSTUDY15. Access 50+ premium resources. St...
LOG IN/SIGN UP
READ THE BIBLE
STUDY TOOLS
EXPLORE MORE
BIBLE GATEWAY PLUS
SAVE 15%!
STORE
Login Now Ar
Login Now Anytime
Online Login
Enter passage, keyword, or topic
Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
Bible Book List
Font Size
VERSE OF THE DAY
Ecclesiastes 11:5 (Christian Standard Bible)
Just as you don't know the path of the wind, or how bones
pregnant woman, so also you don't know the work of God
Read Full Chapter
Enter your book and chapter here and then press the magnifying glass button to the far right
Receive your daily verse by email
Your email address
Subscribe
By submitting your email address, you understand that you will receive email communications from Bible Gateway, a division of The Zondervan Corporation, 3900 Sparks Drive SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 USA, including commercial communications and messages from partners of Bible Gateway. You may unsubscribe from Bible Gateway's emails at any time. If you have any questions, please review our Privacy Policy or email us at privacy@biblegateway.com.
Create Your Free Account
Ending soon!
Listen to the Word

- Let's say for example that we are wanting to find out what the sentence, "I sit as a queen and I am not a widow." in Revelation 18:7 in regard to the destruction of Babylon means. It sounds like a funny little phrase without much obvious meaning to it. If you thought that

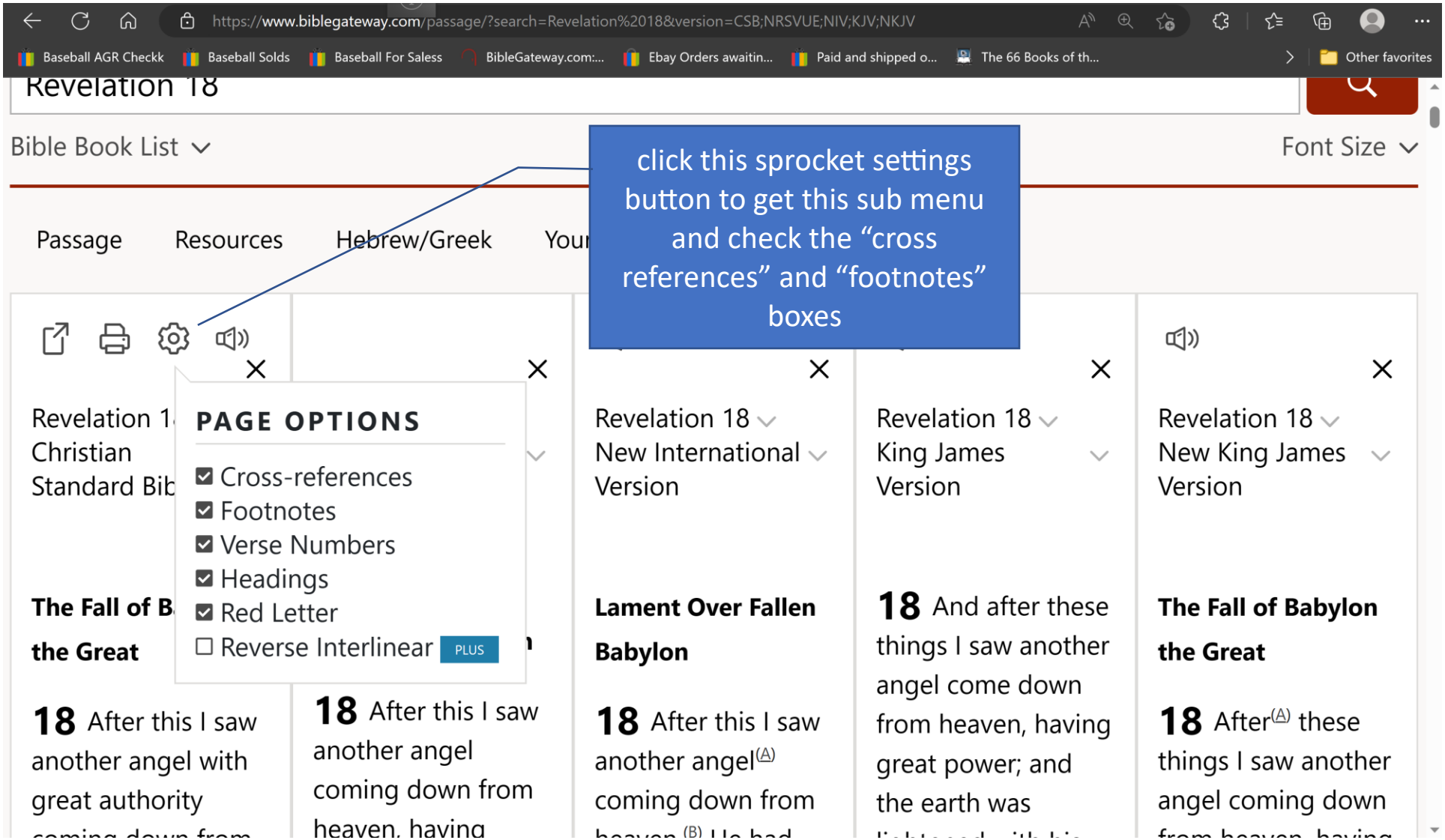
thought, then you would be right. It's a funny little phrase that points to other nearly identical material in the Bible elsewhere. So first adjust your browser window to 150% zoom to eliminate distracting and sometimes questionable banner ads which appear on the right and left of the page. Your web page should look like this below at 150% zoom:


https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+18&version=CSB
Baseball AGR Checkk
Baseball Solds
Baseball For Saless
BibleGateway.com:...
Ebay Orders awaitin...
Paid and shipped o...
The 66 Books of th...
Other favorites
Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
Bible Book List
Font Size
Passage
Resources
Hebrew/Greek
Your Content
Revelation 18
Christian Standard Bible
The Fall of Babylon the Great
18 After this I saw another angel with great authority coming down from heaven, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. 2 He called out in a mighty voice:
It has fallen,[a]
Babylon the Great has fallen!

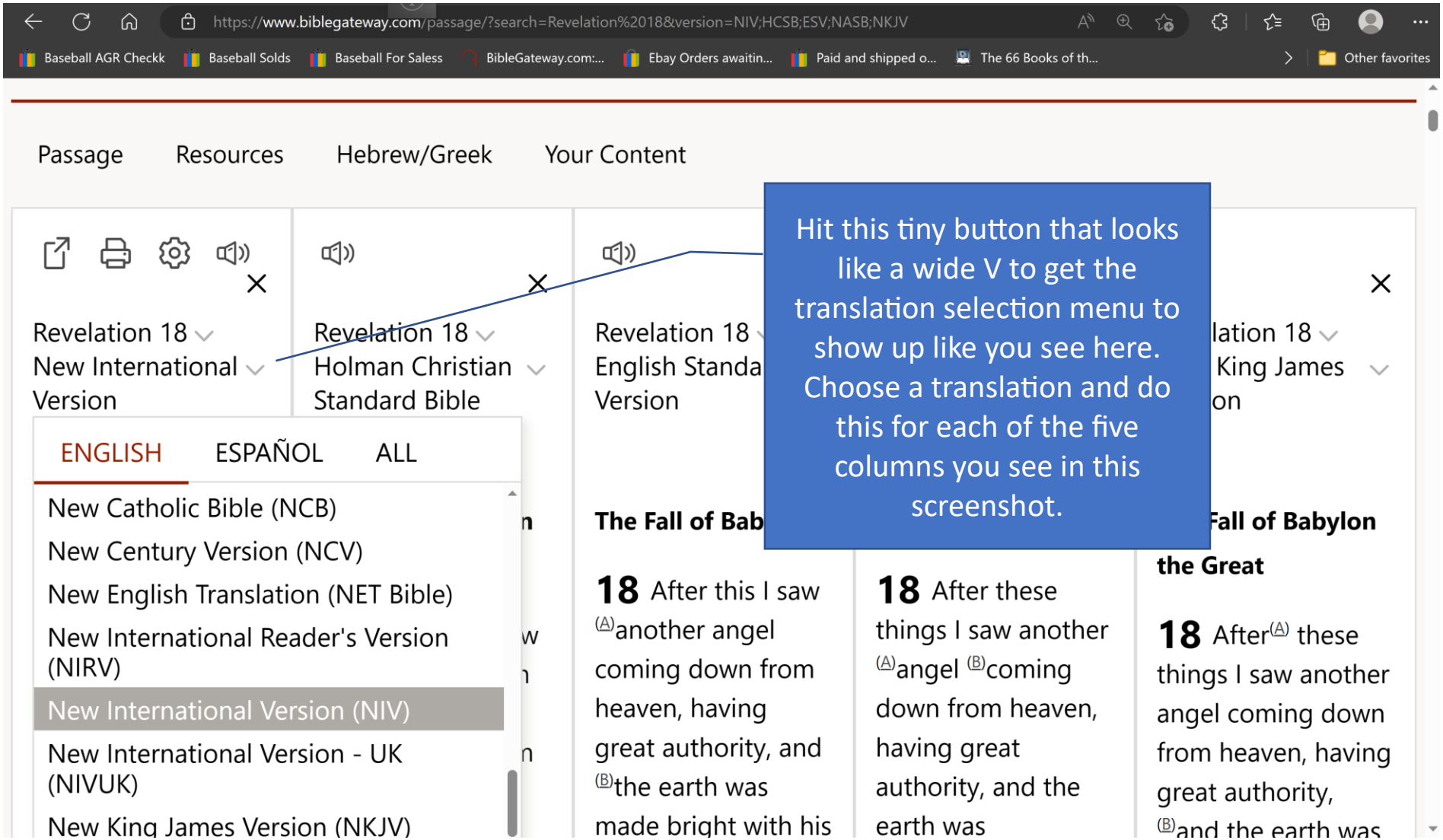
- Then click the “add parallel” button four times as shown below, so that you have 5 parallel versions of the Bible showing up on the screen all at the same time in five columns, as you see here below:



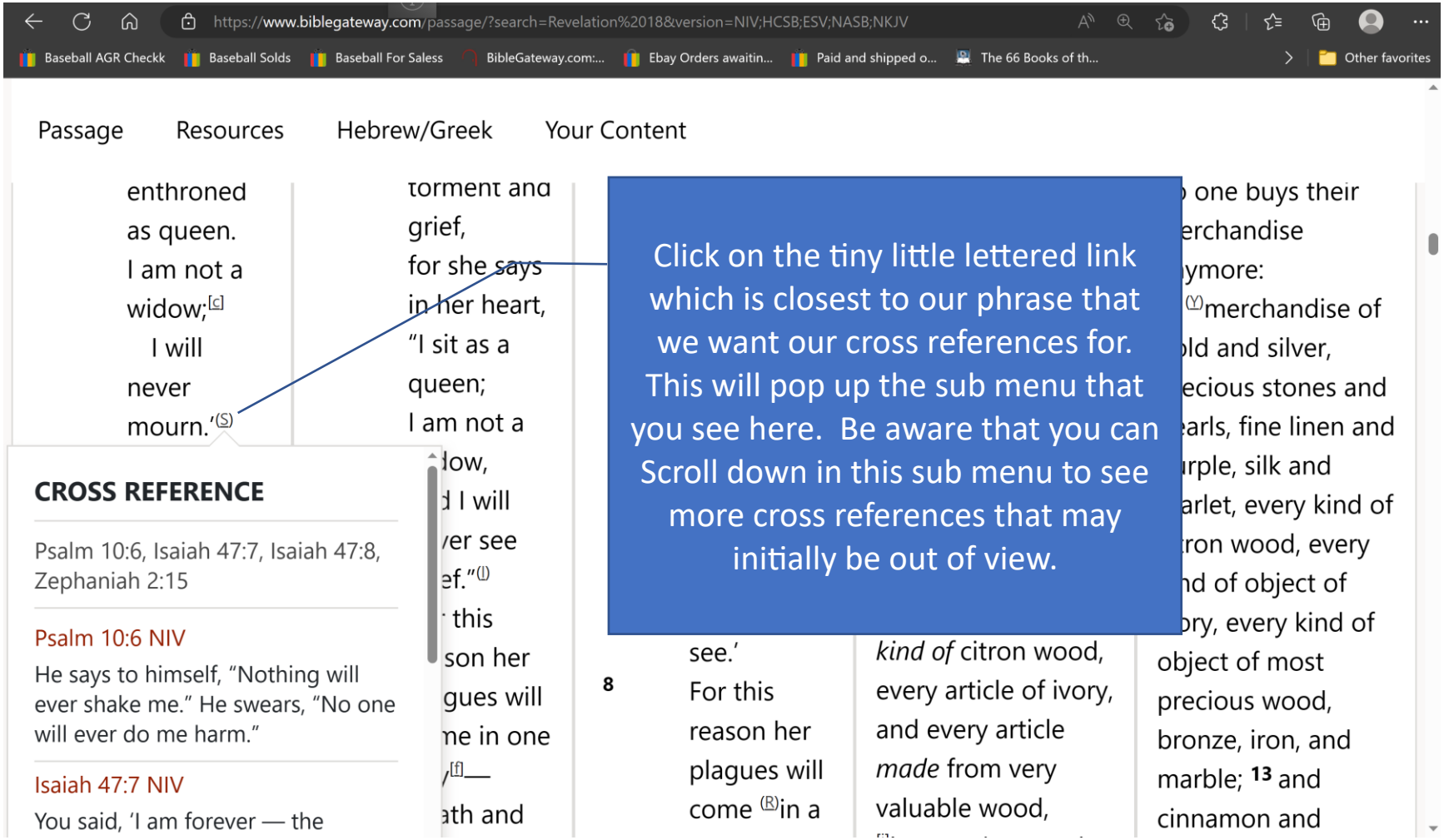
- Now click the sprocket button to open up a little sub menu where you need to be sure that the “cross references” and “footnotes” boxes are checked. See below:



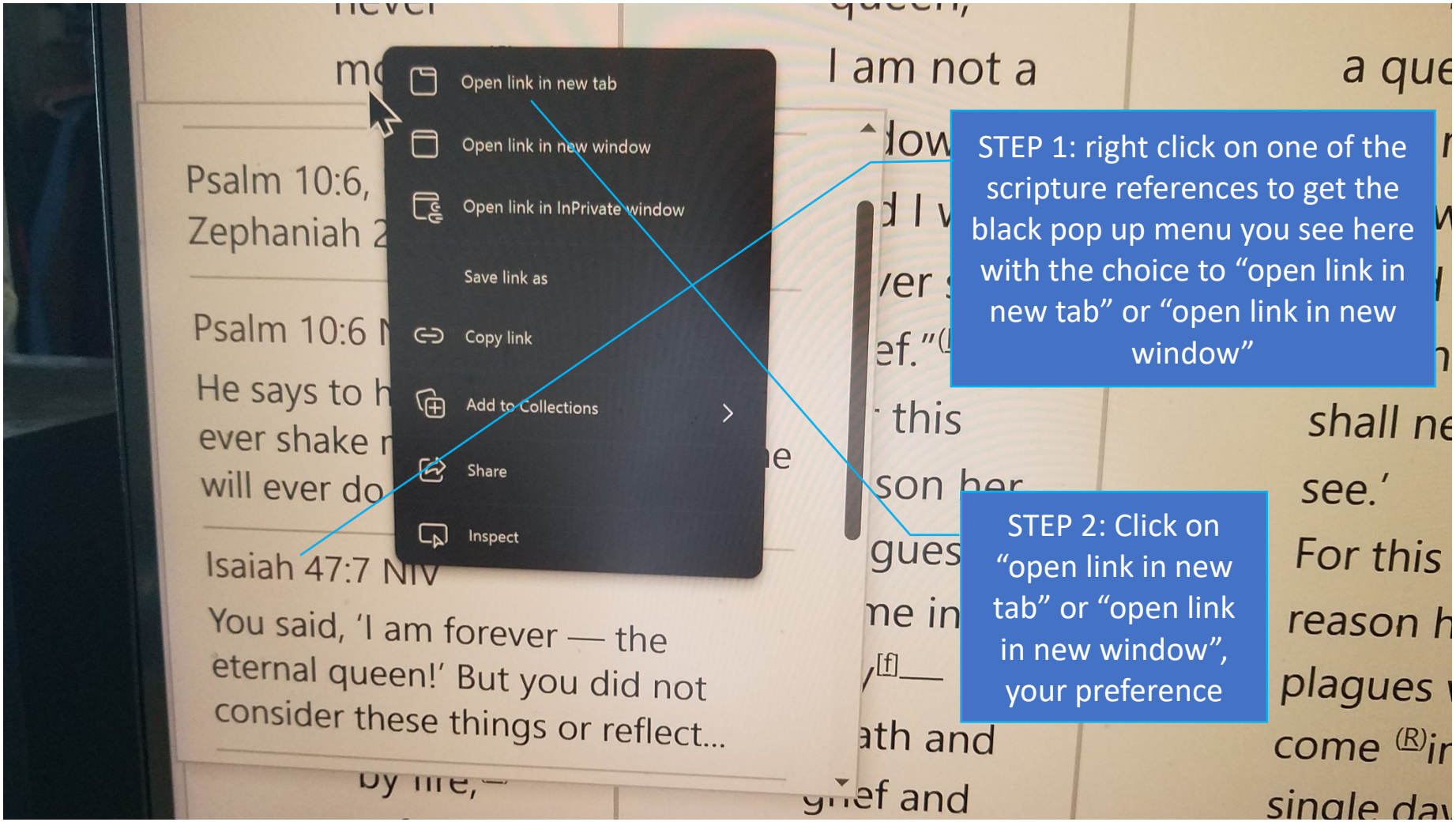
- Now use the version selection drop down buttons in each of the five columns to choose the first five of the best cross referenced study bibles that I showed you in my previous list in this booklet. See below:


https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2018&version=NIV;HCSB;ESV;NASB;NKJV
Baseball AGR Checkk
Baseball Solds
Baseball For Saless
BibleGateway.com:...
Ebay Orders awaitin...
Paid and shipped o...
The 66 Books of th...
Other favorites
Passage
Resources
Hebrew/Greek
Your Content
Revelation 18
New International Version
Revelation 18
Holman Christian Standard Bible
Revelation 18
English Standa
Version
lation 18
King James
on
Hit this tiny button that looks like a wide V to get the translation selection menu to show up like you see here. Choose a translation and do this for each of the five columns you see in this screenshot.
ENGLISH
ESPAÑOL
ALL
New Catholic Bible (NCB)
New Century Version (NCV)
New English Translation (NET Bible)
New International Reader's Version (NIRV)
New International Version (NIV)
New International Version - UK (NIVUK)
New King James Version (NKJV)
The Fall of Bab
18 After this I saw (A)another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and (B)the earth was made bright with his
18 After these things I saw another (A)angel (B)coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was
Fall of Babylon the Great
18 After(A) these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, (B)and the earth was

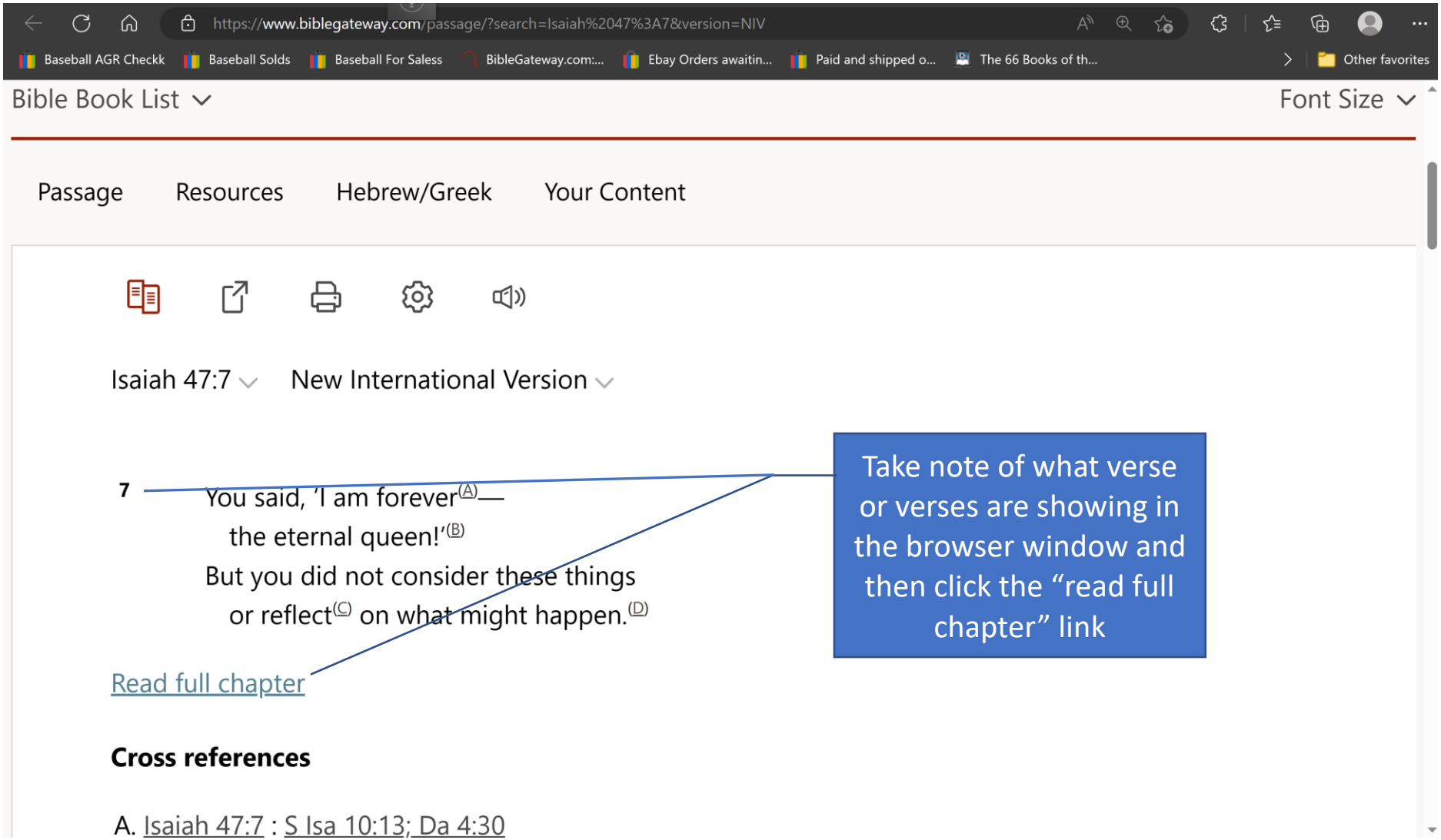
- Now scroll down to Revelation 18:7 in the first of the five Bible translation columns where we see the funny little phrase “I sit as a queen and I am not a widow.” When you get there, click on the tiny lettered link that is closest to the phrase “I sit as a queen and I am not a widow.” A little sub menu will pop up which will list all the cross references for that phrase for that study Bible which is occupying the first column (for example New International Version is the first column in my screenshot above). See below:


https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2018&version=NIV;HCSB;ESV;NASB;NKJV
Baseball AGR Checkk
Baseball Solds
Baseball For Saless
BibleGateway.com:...
Ebay Orders awaitin...
Paid and shipped o...
The 66 Books of th...
Other favorites
Passage
Resources
Hebrew/Greek
Your Content
enthroned as queen. I am not a widow;[c] I will never mourn.’(S)
torment and grief, for she says in her heart, “I sit as a queen; I am not a
CROSS REFERENCE
Psalm 10:6, Isaiah 47:7, Isaiah 47:8, Zephaniah 2:15
Psalm 10:6 NIV
He says to himself, “Nothing will ever shake me.” He swears, “No one will ever do me harm.”
Isaiah 47:7 NIV
You said, ‘I am forever — the
Click on the tiny little lettered link which is closest to our phrase that we want our cross references for. This will pop up the sub menu that you see here. Be aware that you can Scroll down in this sub menu to see more cross references that may initially be out of view.
see.’
For this reason her plagues will come (R)in a
kind of citron wood, every article of ivory, and every article made from very valuable wood,
one buys their merchandise ymore: (Y)merchandise of ld and silver, ecious stones and arls, fine linen and rple, silk and arlet, every kind of ron wood, every nd of object of ory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 and cinnamon and

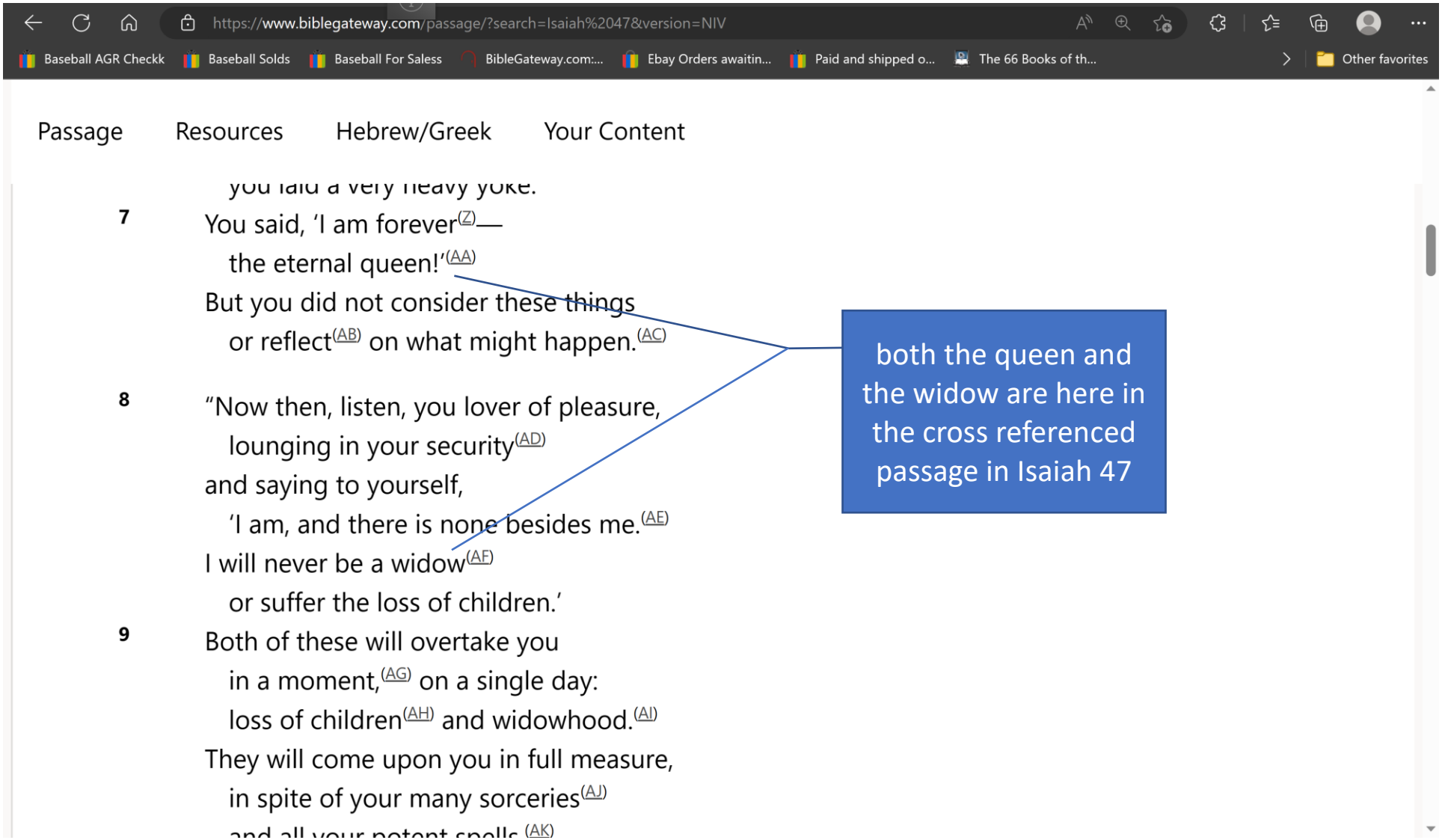
- When you see a cross reference in the sub menu above that you would like to go to and read, right click on the scripture reference and choose “open link in new tab” or “open link in new window” to view the passage without messing up your current view of the five columns of different Bible translations. See below:


Open link in new tab
Open link in new window
Open link in InPrivate window
Save link as
Copy link
Add to Collections
Share
Inspect
Psalm 10:6,
Zephaniah 2
Psalm 10:6
He says to h
ever shake
will ever do
Isaiah 47:7 NIV
You said, ‘I am forever — the eternal queen!’ But you did not consider these things or reflect...
I am not a
a que
shall ne
see.’
For this
reason h
plagues
come
single day
STEP 1: right click on one of the scripture references to get the black pop up menu you see here with the choice to “open link in new tab” or “open link in new window”
STEP 2: Click on “open link in new tab” or “open link in new window”, your preference

- Now navigate to your new browser tab or new browser window where the cross referenced passage will appear. Take note of what the verse number or numbers are showing in the window and then click the “read full chapter” to properly see the cross referenced verse or verses in the context of the whole chapter. See below:



- Even when we just follow this first cross reference we are richly rewarded because we see that both the “queen” and the “widow” from Revelation 18:7 show up in Isaiah 47. See below:


https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2047&version=NIV
Baseball AGR Checkk
Baseball Solds
Baseball For Saless
BibleGateway.com:...
Ebay Orders awaitin...
Paid and shipped o...
The 66 Books of th...
Other favorites
Passage
Resources
Hebrew/Greek
Your Content
you laid a very heavy yoke.
7 You said, ‘I am forever(Z)—
the eternal queen!’(AA)
But you did not consider these things
or reflect(AB) on what might happen.(AC)
8 “Now then, listen, you lover of pleasure,
lounging in your security(AD)
and saying to yourself,
‘I am, and there is none besides me.(AE)
I will never be a widow(AF)
or suffer the loss of children.’
9 Both of these will overtake you
in a moment,(AG) on a single day:
loss of children(AH) and widowhood.(AI)
They will come upon you in full measure,
in spite of your many sorceries(AJ)
and all your potent spells (AK)
both the queen and the widow are here in the cross referenced passage in Isaiah 47

If we read the whole of Isaiah 47, we even find that this is also a description of the destruction of a place called Babylon, just as Revelation 17 to 18 is! The reference in Revelation 18:7 to this Isaiah 47 passage shows us that there is some relation between Revelation 17 to 18 and Isaiah 47. Now that we hit a base hit on just the first reference that we have checked, we need to go back to our original browser window with the five translation columns in it and keep checking all of the tiny lettered cross reference links in the other Bible translation columns associated with the sentence, “I sit as a queen and I am not a widow”.

Some of the little tiny letter links found throughout the text of each of the five Bible translations will be footnotes too, not just cross reference links. It makes sense to look at these footnotes too because sometimes they are very enlightening. Clicking on each tiny lettered footnote link directly will cause the footnote to display in its entirety in a sub window for easy reading. As you go to each of the five columns checking all of the tiny letter links associated with the verse in all five columns, you will uncover more and more cross references which are missing from some of the study Bible translations but present in others. This is why we are using multiple study Bible translations, so we don't miss anything. As you've noticed, I only opened up five Bible translations in the example we've just gone through. This is in spite of the fact that my list of very well cross referenced study bibles has seven. Now go back to your window with the five parallel study bibles in it and use the drop down menus to change two of the columns to the last two study bibles that we haven't looked at yet. These are the *Christian*

Standard Bible and the *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*. Both of these study Bible translations show an additional reference which does not show up in any of the other five bibles we already looked at. This reference at first does not seem all that great, and it's hard to see how it is connected. If we go and read it though, we will find that this last additional cross reference is very valuable. This again illustrates my point that looking in multiple cross referenced study bibles is **EXTREMELY** valuable. The additional cross reference that does not appear in the other five study bibles is to Ezekiel 28:2-8. If you read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 28 you will see that it is also a prophecy or an account of the destruction of a rich and prosperous port city named Tyre. This destruction of the port city of Tyre is similar to the destruction of the port city of Babylon in Revelation 17 to 18. If you then zoom out even further and read the entire account of the destruction of Tyre in Ezekiel 26 through 28, you will find that there are even more similarities between the destruction of Tyre in Ezekiel 26 to 28 and the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 17 to 18. You can work these connections even harder if you want to, using the instructions in this tutorial again on the other verses found in all the passages that have been mentioned here in this tutorial (Ezekiel 26-28, Isaiah 47, and Revelation 17-18). If you do this, you will find that they contain several other important cross referenced phrases. Just look for other funny looking little phrases that don't seem to mean much on their own and check the cross references. These phrases create a network of phrasal connections and striking similarities between the destructions of Nineveh in Zephaniah 2:13-15, Nineveh in Nahum 1 to 3, Tyre in Ezekiel

26 to 28, Edom in Isaiah 34, Babylon in Revelation 17 to 18, and Babylon in Isaiah 47. All these passages taken together are a complete box of puzzle pieces which when assembled form a very revealing end times prophetic picture. This is the strength of cross references, even if it does take some work to find them. Scholars have been trying to figure out what the destruction of Babylon in Revelation means for hundreds of years. All the connections that we've just discussed are certainly valuable clues.

Even after following all the steps in this tutorial there are going to be some cross references which you still won't be able to find. It's a small percentage of them, but there will still be ones that you miss. You could use this tutorial and line up a few more study bibles in parallel columns to find some more. Of course you would just choose some additional study bibles other than the seven that I've recommended here in this booklet. Possibly an even better step is to go to some of the highly specialized, usually expensive, and uncommon cross reference books produced by scholars. Two such books that are available for free on archive.org after just setting up a simple account with your name and e-mail address are here:

1. *Dictionary of BIBLICAL IMAGERY*
An encyclopedic exploration of the images, symbols, motifs, metaphors, figures of speech and literary patterns of the Bible

2. *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*

Another important thing to consider when trying to dig up cross references is that many biblical cross references get lost in translation. A biblical writer and the Holy Spirit may drop in a funny word or phrase to point right to another part of the Bible, but then later when the ancient languages are translated to English the funny little word or phrase gets changed to something else which makes it impossible to see the connection. For example, here below in 2 Peter 3, the phrase "hastening the coming of the day of God" is a very likely reference to Isaiah 60:22:

*[2 Peter 3:12-13 NASB20] 12 looking for and **hastening** the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

Peter is talking about the new heavens and the new earth which are a result of the day of God. He uses the unusual word "hastening" to express some concept of helping to bring it closer in time. In Isaiah 60 below we also see the language of the new heavens and the new earth where only righteousness dwells. Isaiah 60:22 in the English Standard Version below also shows the word "hasten", making a likely connection between Isaiah 60:22 and 2 Peter 3:12:

[Isaiah 60:20-22 ESV] 20 Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and

your days of mourning shall be ended. 21 Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified. 22 The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will ***hasten*** *it.*

If we look at Isaiah 60:22 below in the New American Standard Bible on the other hand, the translator has used a little bit more additional explanation of the word hasten by putting "bring it about quickly in its time".

[Isaiah 60:22 NASB20] 22 "The smallest one will become a thousand, And the least one a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will bring it about quickly in its time."

If you found a cross reference in a study Bible showing that 2 Peter 3:12 with its word "hastening" is a reference to Isaiah 60:22, you might go and look up Isaiah 60:22 in the New American Standard Bible and completely fail to see why one is a reference to the other. "Plain English" or "easy to read" Bible translations do much more erasing of cross references like this. More accurate word for word literal translations, which may be a little more choppy or awkward to read, generally do less of this erasing of cross references. This may be something important to consider before committing yourself to always reading a translation that speaks in the plain English vernacular like your genius cousin Bruno. These types of translations more frequently

just erase what God is trying to tell you through the hundreds of cross references which appear throughout the Bible. With a more literal translation you will generally be seeing phrases and wording much closer to what they actually are so that when they pop up later in other verses you will be able to recognize the connection and will get what God is trying to tell you. Literal translations also commit some of this type of offense, but it is much less frequent. So if you go to look up a cross referenced verse and can't see why it's connected, it's useful to look it up in one or two more literal translations to see if the wording may match in one of those. The connection may just simply be lost in translation.

As you see here a big take away is to be sure to use several study bibles or cross reference resources to uncover the numerous connections in God's word. Although this booklet will be dated very shortly when biblegateway.com changes their website, the concept of using several study bibles or cross reference resources to avoid missing cross references will likely be useful for a long time. Secondary to using several study bibles or cross reference resources is being sure to read a translation that is not erasing what God is trying to tell you. More important than either of these though is to make sure that your motivation for getting knowledge is to improve your skills at loving God and loving people. Anything other than this is just taking a step closer to being a noisy gong or a clanging symbol:

[1 Corinthians 13:1 NASB20] 1 If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Lastly, it is helpful to keep in mind when studying the Bible that God is the one who gives wisdom. No amount of books or learning can give the level of understanding that God can:

[James 1:5-6 NASB20] 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

[Proverbs 2:6-7 NASB20] 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

We need to be sure to pray and ask Him for wisdom and trust in Him that He will answer. I hope this booklet has been helpful for you and that God blesses you and your efforts to draw nearer to Him through His word. If you know of any other serious students of the Bible, please consider forwarding this booklet on to them.

In Christ,
David Aaron Beaty

Bible quotation sources

1.
NASB20. Scripture quotations marked (NASB20) are used from the *New American Standard Bible® (NASB®*). Copyright© 2020. The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org.

2.
ESV. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are used from the *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®.* Copyright© 2016 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

3.
NRSVUE. Scripture quotations marked (NRSVUE) are used from the *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*. Copyright© 2021. National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

4.
NIV. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are used from the holy Bible, *New International Version® NIV® Copyright©* 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™